



John Gilpin

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THE DIVERTING HISTORY
OF JOHN GILPIN

THE
Diberting History
OF
John Gilpin

SHEWING how he went further
than he intended, and came
safe home again

Embellish'd with woodcuts drawn
and engraved by ROBERT SEAVER



BOSTON & NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN & COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
M^{DCCC}CVI

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SECOND IMPRESSION

TO
Harriet Walton Seaver
FOR WHOSE AMUSEMENT THE WORK
WAS BEGUN AND WHOSE
ENTHUSIASM INSPIRED
ITS COMPLETION



THE DIVERTING HISTORY
OF JOHN GILPIN



THE
Diberting History
OF
John Gilpin

John Gilpin was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A trainband captain eke was
he
Of famous London town.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



John Gilpin's spouse said to her
dear,
"Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years,
yet we
No holiday have seen.

Tomorrow is our wedding day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
All in a chaise and pair.

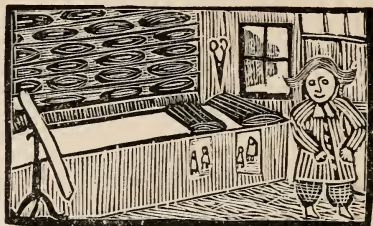
OF JOHN GILPIN



My sister, and my sister's child,
Myself, and children three,
Will fill the chaise, so you must
ride
On horseback after we."

He soon replied, "I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest
dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

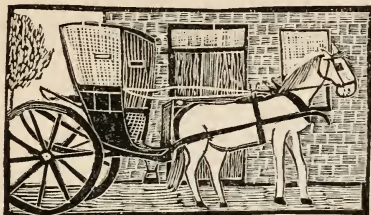
THE DIVERTING HISTORY



I am a linendraper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the calender
Will lend his horse to go."

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, "That's well
said;
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnished with our
own,
Which is both bright and clear."

OF JOHN GILPIN



John Gilpin kissed his loving wife,
O'erjoyed was he to find,
That though on pleasure she was
bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise
was brought,
But yet was not allowed
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



So three doors off the chaise was
stayed,
Where they did all get in ;
Six precious souls, and all agog
To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round
went the wheels,
Were never folk so glad ;
The stones did rattle underneath
As if Cheapside were mad.

OF JOHN GILPIN



John Gilpin at his horse's side
Seized fast the flowing mane,
And up he got, in haste to ride,
But soon came down again;

For saddle-tree scarce reached
 had he,
His journey to begin,
When, turning round his head,
 he saw
Three customers come in.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



So down he came ; for loss of time,
Although it grieved him sore,
Yet loss of pence, full well he
knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas long before the customers
Were suited to their mind,
When Betty screaming came
down stairs,—
“The wine is left behind!”

OF JOHN GILPIN



“Good lack!” quoth he, “yet
bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword
When I do exercise.”

Now Mrs. Gilpin, careful soul,
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she
loved,
And keep it safe and sound.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he
drew,
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be
Equipped from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brushed
and neat,
He manfully did throw.

OF JOHN GILPIN



Now see him mounted once
again,
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones
With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother
road
Beneath his well-shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which galled him in his seat.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



So “Fair and softly” John he
cried,
But John he cried in vain;
That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,
He grasped the mane with both
his hands,
And eke with all his might.

OF JOHN GILPIN



His horse, who never in that sort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had
got
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or
nought;
Away went hat and wig;
He little dreamed when he set out
Of running such a rig.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



The wind did blow, the cloak did
fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
Till, loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then might all people well dis-
cern,
The bottles he had slung;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

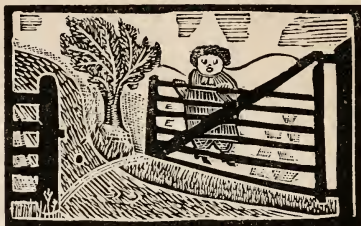
OF JOHN GILPIN



The dogs did bark, the children
screamed,
Up flew the windows all,
And every soul cried out “Well
done!”
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin — who but he?
His fame soon spread around;
“He carries weight, he rides a race!
’Tis for a thousand pound!”

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



And still, as fast as he drew
near,
'Twas wonderful to view,
How in a trice the turnpike men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now, as he went bowing
down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shattered at a blow.

OF JOHN GILPIN



Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks
to smoke,
As they had basted been.

But still he seemed to carry
weight,
With leathern girdle braced;
For all might see the bottle necks
Still dangling at his waist.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



Thus all through merry Isling-
ton

These gambols he did play,
Until he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay ;

And there he threw the Wash
about,

On both sides of the way,
Just like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.

OF JOHN GILPIN



At Edmonton his loving wife
From the balcony spied
Her tender husband, wondering
much
To see how he did ride.

“Stop, stop, John Gilpin! Here’s
the house!”
They all at once did cry;
“The dinner waits and we are tired.”
Said Gilpin, “So am I!”

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



But yet his horse was not a whit
Inclined to tarry there;
For why? his owner had a
house
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,
Shot by an archer strong;
So did he fly—which brings me
to
The middle of my song.

OF JOHN GILPIN



Away went Gilpin, out of
breath,
And sore against his will,
Till, at his friend the calender's,
His horse at last stood still.

The calender, amazed to see
His neighbour in such trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the
gate,
And thus accosted him:

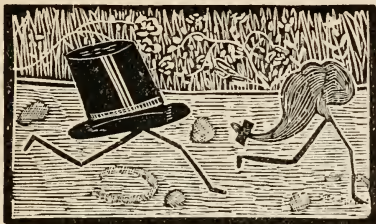
THE DIVERTING HISTORY



“What news? what news? your
tidings tell;
Tell me you must and shall;
Say why bareheaded you are
come,
Or why you come at all?”

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
And loved a timely joke;
And thus unto the calender,
In merry guise, he spoke:

OF JOHN GILPIN



“I came because your horse
would come ;
And, if I well forebode,
My hat and wig will soon be
here:—
They are upon the road.”

The calender, right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Returned him not a single word,
But to the house went in ;

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



Whence straight he came with
hat and wig;
A wig that flowed behind,
A hat not much the worse for
wear,
Each comely in its kind.

He held them up and in his turn
Thus showed his ready wit:
“My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs must fit.

OF JOHN GILPIN



But let me scrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face;
And stop and eat, for well you
may
Be in a hungry case."

Said John, "It is my wedding
day,
And all the world would stare,
If wife should dine at Edmonton
And I should dine at Ware."

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



So turning to his horse he said,
"I am in haste to dine;
'Twas for your pleasure you
came here,
You shall go back for mine."

Ah! luckless speech and bootless
boast,
For which he paid full dear;
For while he spake, a braying ass
Did sing most loud and clear;
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OF JOHN GILPIN



Whereat his horse did snort,
as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And galloped off with all his
might,
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig:
He lost them sooner than at first;
For why? — they were too big.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



Now mistress Gilpin, when she
saw
Her husband posting down
Into the country far away,
She pulled out half-a-crown;

And thus unto the youth she said,
That drove them to the Bell,
“This shall be yours when you
bring back
My husband safe and well.”

OF JOHN GILPIN



The youth did ride, and soon did
meet

John coming back amain ;
Whom in a trice he tried to stop
By catching at his rein ;

But not performing what he meant
And gladly would have done,
The frightened steed he frightened
more,
And made him faster run.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY



Away went Gilpin, and away
Went postboy at his heels,
The postboy's horse right glad
to miss
The lumbering of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road,
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With postboy scampering in the
rear,
They raised the hue and cry; —

OF JOHN GILPIN



“Stop thief! stop thief! a high-
wayman!”

Not one of them was mute;
And all and each that passed that
way
Did join in the pursuit.

And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space;
The toll-men thinking as before,
That Gilpin rode a race.

JOHN GILPIN



And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town;
Nor stopped till where he had
got up
He did again get down.

Now let us sing long live the
King,
And Gilpin, long live he;
And when he next doth ride abroad
May I be there to see!

ADDITIONAL VERSES
AND NOTES

ADDITIONAL VERSES AND NOTES

The story of John Gilpin's ride was related to Cowper by his friend, Lady Austen, who had heard it as a child. It caused the poet a sleepless night, as he was kept awake by laughter at it. During these restless hours he turned it into the famous ballad. It appeared in the "Public Advertiser," November 14, 1782, anonymously.

A celebrated actor named Henderson took it for one of his

ADDITIONAL VERSES

public recitations at Freemasons' Hall. It became immediately so popular that it was printed everywhere, — in newspapers, magazines, and separately. It was even sung as a common ballad in the streets. It has preserved its popularity to the present day.

The original John Gilpin was, it is said, a Mr. Beyer, a linen-draper, who lived at the Cheap-side corner of Paternoster Row. He died in 1791, at the age of nearly a hundred years.

The following matter appears in Moore's Book of Ballads, pub-

AND NOTES

lished by Bell and Daldy, 186, Fleet Street, and 6, York Street, Covent Garden, London.

[“ In Hone’s ‘ Table Book,’ ii, 79, the following stanzas are stated to have been found, in the handwriting of Cowper, among the papers of Mrs. Unwin. In the opinion of Mr. Hone’s correspondent, they evidently formed part of an intended episode to the *Diverting History of John Gilpin*. They are not given in any edition of the poet’s works.”]

Then Mrs. Gilpin sweetly said
Unto her children three
“ I’ll clamber o’er this style so high
And you climb after me,”

But having climbed unto the top
She could no further go,
But sate, to every passer by
A spectacle and show :

ADDITIONAL VERSES

Who said, Your spouse and you this
day

Both show your horsemanship ;
And if you stay till he comes back
Your horse will need no whip.



